

From: [K Franco Simmons](#)
To: [Planning Department](#)
Subject: Pubic Comment for Planning Commission Meeting of 5/25/2022
Date: Monday, May 23, 2022 3:30:40 PM

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Planning Commission,

I presented the following public comment to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting of May 19, 2022. Please take these comments under consideration in your duties as Planning Commissioners.

Thank you,
Kathleen Franco Simmons

Over the past 8 months, I've spoken to you about historic Empire City, located at the bend of the Carson River, three miles west of downtown, and the importance of its history. I've shared that my family is a part of that history, as my grandfather was born and raised there.

I've spoken to you about Empire Cemetery on the hill just east of the site of Empire City, and the importance of protecting it. I've shared that I have numerous ancestors buried there. I've spoken to the board about the fact that my uncle passed away in 2018 and had expected to be buried in Empire Cemetery with our ancestors, however, that my Aunt was not allowed to bury him there due to an inability for the city to find the records of where burial sites are. I've requested assistance with restoring my family's burial rights in Empire Cemetery. My father, who just turned 87, intends to be buried there alongside his father, grandfather, uncles and great-grandparents, and I hope to be buried there too.

I've spoken to you about the importance of rezoning Empire Cemetery from General Industrial (GI) and amending the Master Plan from Community / Regional Commercial ("C/RC") to match the zoning of Lone Mountain Cemetery. I understand there have been complications due to the fact that Carson City has never fully completed the requirements for gaining clear title of Empire Cemetery from Ormsby County.

I've spoken to you about the land corridor between the bend of the Carson River and Highway 50, that this has been used for over a century for ingress and egress to the river, for recreational uses, and is also a wildlife corridor.

At the last Board meeting, two weeks ago, I spoke about a request to consider purchasing the last remaining parcels of undeveloped property that were a part of Empire City. The remaining parcels of land at the bend of the Carson River that once constituted Empire City have been advertised for sale since at least February 12th. I presented a request and written materials to the Open Space Advisory Committee at their meeting of February 28, 2022, asking that the City purchase these parcels for

open space, recreational and historical purposes. This could be done using "Quality of Life Initiative" funds that are meant for that purpose. The land could be put to recreational and open space use purposes, with historical markers and signage.

On Friday, May 6th, a large "grading" and "erosion control" project commenced on the properties surrounding the north and west side of Empire Cemetery Hill. The bulk of the west slope of the hillside has now been removed at a nearly 90-degree angle, coming to within 10 feet of the Empire Cemetery fence line. There are gravesites inside Empire Cemetery within 1 foot of the fence line. My great grand-mother's grave is 8 to ten feet from the fence line, and 16 to 20 feet from the nearly vertical drop-off that was once the west slope of the hill.

I have spoken with staff in the Engineering Department, and I was told that the grading project is being done according to permit, and I was given a copy of the "Mass Grading" plans.

I can't tell you how very, extremely disappointed I am in my hometown city for allowing this very destructive removal of the west slope of Empire Cemetery Hill. The Master Plan includes visions, themes and guiding principles that speak to protection of hillsides, preservation of historic sites, stewardship of the natural environment, to name a few that are applicable here. I have also expressed concerns about archaeological remains in this area, and the respectful treatment of them. None of these seem to have been taken into consideration by staff in approving this "grading" project.

I would like to formally request that staff be directed to take actions to:

- 1- Complete all requirements for gaining clear title and deed to Empire Cemetery.**
- 2- Upon gaining clear title to Empire Cemetery, amend the Master Plan and the Zoning Map and ordinances to designate Empire Cemetery to the same protective designations as Lone Mountain Cemetery.**
- 3- Provide funding for Parks and Recreation and/or Public Works staff to provide regular upkeep of Empire Cemetery, and to complete the search of records of the cemetery such that my family can have our burial rights restored.**
- 4- Take actions necessary for the purchase and preservation of the remaining undeveloped properties that once were historic Empire City.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Kathleen Franco Simmons
2108 Utah Street
Carson City, NV